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Synopsis of Important Articles.

The Authority of the Pulpit in a Time of Critical Research and Social Confusion.*—Criticism must and ought to go on, and *Christian* scholars should be the last scholars to be forbidden to inquire into the sources and ground of faith. But how are we to carry on the teaching function of the ministry steadily and confidently, without fear and without loss, under the critical investigations which involve to a greater or less degree a reconstruction of popular opinion respecting the Scriptures? (1) By utilizing those intermediate sources of authority which may have been neglected, the evidence of the Christian experience and the testimony of the church. It may prove to be greatly to our advantage if we are led by the stress of the critical controversy to a deeper appreciation of these. (2) By the true understanding and intelligent use of historical criticism as applied to the Bible. The question between the old and the new treatment of the Scriptures is primarily a question about the idea of Scripture. So that our chief concern with the results of criticism is not to reckon up the gains and losses occasioned by it at different points, but to estimate fairly the positive value of the conception of Scripture which it gives us. The real authority of the Bible does not lie in its infallibility, but in the manifest presence of God in its pages, as he is therein revealed working through individuals and nations, making known his desires and thoughts and purposes, and finally declaring himself in sacrifice. The Bible is most authoratative just where it brings God nearest. Historical criticism has already given far more than it has taken away. It has put reality in place of infallibility in the chief seat of authority. Instead of a Bible communicated by verbal inspiration, of equal authority in all places, inerrant where mistakes would naturally—almost necessarily—have been made, it is giving us a Bible communicated naturally, through men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; who also believed and therefore spoke; who wrote of things they knew according to their knowledge, and of things transcending human knowledge according to their quickened, purified, and enlarged apprehension of the mysteries of God; who bore faithful and true witness, according to the very diversity of their personal observation and experience, to the great facts and events through which revelation culminated, before their very eyes, in the life, passion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and who in a simple but grand unconsciousness left their work absolutely unencumbered by any unnatural claims. I think it not too much to say that historical criticism has reopened, reproduced, reanimated the Scriptures to the mind of the church. We have been reading the Bible chiefly in the light of a communication from God, rather than of a revelation of him. For the Bible is more than so many commandments, and so many invitations, and so many promises, and so many warnings; and that something more than which the Bible is, and which it gives, is the very thing which men want most when oppressed by the sense of the mystery of the universe, or by the sense of

* By Prof. Wm. J. Tucker, in *Andover Review*, Oct. 1891, pp. 384-402, being the opening-address at Andover Theological Seminary.

the mystery of their own lives. It is the true and sufficient conception of God, of God self-revealed in the Scriptures. The direction of the thought in the reading of the Bible is thus changed, and the preacher who so reads for himself will best teach by example this enlarged use of the Bible, and also make its teachings most impressive.

The latter part of Prof. Tucker's address, treating the application of Christianity to existing social conditions, while full of truth and power, do not lie within the STUDENT'S province. His words above presented in abstract are significant, ringing words. The question to-day presses more severely upon the minister who has caught the spirit of true Bible study than that of how it shall affect his pulpit work. Some say: we will wait until all is settled and approved. Then whom will you delegate to settle and approve these things? Can you conscientiously refuse to do your part of that important work? Moreover, is there no joy or crown in disseminating a better knowledge of divine truth? And as a matter of fact, things *are* essentially settled. Many matters of detail are still in dispute, but, as Prof. Tucker truly says, the results of biblical criticism are not in the form of a ledger account with each item—miracle, incident, teaching, in which debits and credits have been shifted to a greater or less degree. The result is a changed conception of the Bible as a whole—a reconstructed idea of its origin, character, contents, meaning, and significance. This new conception is already fixed and by the unanimity of the best and truest scholars it is approved. It devolves upon the ministry, both as a duty and as a privilege, to gain this for themselves, and to give it from the pulpit to those who are waiting eagerly for it in the pews and Sunday school room.

The Lex Talionis.* This law has been recently represented as legalizing private revenge, and cited as an instance of the imperfection of the Mosaic code. But this is an entire mistake. The law (Ex. 20:24; Lev. 24:19f; Deut. 19:21) by no means authorized individual retaliation, the taking of the execution of justice into one's own hands. It is given among judicial statutes, and is so to be interpreted. It declared what the authorities should impose for the prevention of criminal offenses. The law is not peculiar to the Pentateuch; it is found among the Twelve Tables of Rome, that venerable monument of early jurisprudence. Nor is it consistent with other moral precepts of the Old Testament (Ex. 23:4; Lev. 19:27f; Prov. 25:21f), which enjoin neighborly love, forbearance and forgiveness. When Christ set aside the saying, "An eye for an eye," etc., he aimed at the gross error of those who were in his own time perverting the law by giving it a private interpretation, justifying personal revenge. It was no part of Christ's object, in the Sermon on the Mount, to correct the morality of the Mosaic law; but he did seek to expose and condemn the corrupt glosses fastened upon it by his degenerate countrymen.

Evidently Dr. Gladden, to whose discussion of the Lex Talionis (in his recent book entitled, "Who Wrote the Bible?"), reference seems here to be made, takes a different view from that of Dr. Chambers concerning the provision of the Mosaic Code. Before the Law can be understood, four questions need to be answered: (1) is there anything in the text or context to indicate whether the Law was individual or judicial? (2) what does the history show as regards its observance: was it in practice interpreted judicially or privately? (3) which character is the more in consonance with the other provisions of the Mosaic Code? what was Christ's attitude toward the Mosaic Code in general, and this Law in particular? Now of these four points, the first can receive no conclusive answer, which makes an answer to the second of supreme importance in determining the character of the Law. Moreover, the fourth point receives no adequate treatment. It may be said in general, that there has been and is a strong tendency to *gospelize* (a bad word, but intelligible) the Old Testament History. Thus the natural impression which the record would make is superseded by a forced view which wrests the historical facts to conform to a mold more

* By Talbot W. Chambers, D. D., in N. Y. *Independent*, September 24, 1891.